



THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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Do We Want the Welfare State?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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THE REVIEWING STAND is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by the stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. **THE REVIEWING STAND** presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University; Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago.

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Do We Want the Welfare State?

MR. MCBURNEY: I have an announcement which pleases us greatly. The Northwestern Reviewing Stand has been selected as the outstanding educational program on the air by the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. We appreciate this honor, especially since it comes from an organization whose competence we respect so highly.

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Gentlemen, if we define the welfare state as one which assumes responsibility for the welfare of the people, I think you are agreed that a government which assumes no responsibility for welfare is untenable. I think you are also agreed that one which assumes complete responsibility is indefensible. Our problem today then is one of considering the extent and kind of welfare activities.

Two Views

Mr. Krueger thinks we have not gone far enough; Mr. Haake thinks we have gone too far. Each speaker will state his position and then we will discuss the issues which these statements raise.

May we hear from you, Krueger?

MR. KRUEGER: In the last couple of years the term "welfare state" has come to be used as a term of political attack. It is a political attack by people who are opposed to specific welfare measures that are now under consideration, primarily by the federal government. It is an attack, in my opinion, not based on political philosophy but is based on specific opposition to specific measures.

Welfare state activities are very, very old. In Andrew Jackson's time, as President of the United States, there was a larger proportion of the federal budget actually being spent on

welfare activities than has been the case in recent years. I think the problem is choosing between different ways of getting things done. There are some activities we can do better as individuals; others that we can do better as municipalities, others as states of the union, and a great many others can be handled more effectively as activities of the federal government. But I don't think that the concept of the welfare state requires that it develop into a pure and simple grab bag state. And if in the discussion of whether we do or do not want the welfare state, we can distinguish between the sort of welfare activities that we think a state ought to be involved in, and the sort that ought to be left to other agencies or individuals, then I think we can make some contribution to the public on this subject.

'Extend Activities'

MR. MCBURNEY: In general, you are in favor of extending the area of the federal government in welfare activities?

MR. KRUEGER: I am quite sure that the area of the federal government ought to be extended, that is, its coverage in the field of welfare activities. There are specific measures that ought to be added and added quickly. They will be called welfare measures, added to activities of the federal government.

MR. MCBURNEY: That gives Krueger's position. Where do you stand, Haake?

MR. HAAKE: To me it is significant that the United States, the one country in the world which avoided the welfare state in its development, has nevertheless produced the highest state of well-being for its people in

all time. When you compare what has happened in England, Germany and elsewhere, it helps us to understand that the welfare state finally defeats its own purpose through a lowered efficiency in utilizing the tools of production.

I recognize that the welfare state, which is really socialism on the march, does not mean quite what it meant some years ago. Then we thought of socialism as being the ownership of the tools of production. We have learned that the central government can get the results through controlling those tools without owning them. And so the modern welfare state is one in which the government, assuming responsibility for the welfare of its citizens, must also take over control of economic life in sufficient degree to control the fixing of prices, distribution of income, and spending of surpluses.

Self-Reliance

To me it is tremendously important that democracy develop more self-reliant men and women. And at bottom I think those who believe in the welfare state and those who oppose it disagree primarily on this philosophy. The one believes in collectivism, which will bring about the greater welfare of the people; the other is inclined to emphasize more strongly self-reliance and independence.

I yield to no man in my ardent desire for well-being for the people. I am opposed to the welfare state as the less effective way of securing that welfare, moreover, it brings in its train evils which are considerably worse than those which it sets out to cure.

MR. MCBURNEY: Just how far have we gone in these welfare activities? In other words, do we have the welfare state now, Krueger?

MR. KRUEGER: One quick way of getting a judgment on that would be to take a look at the federal budget, because it is the federal government primarily that we are talking about. Now, if you take a look and see what

the federal government's money is being spent on, I can see very good reasons for calling the present state the "military state" with military expenditures for 1949 running to around \$13 billion a year. I can see fairly good reasons for calling it the "veterans state." I can see some reasons for calling it the "interest paying state," or the "foreign policy state." But in terms of the way the federal government spends its money I should think that it would be much more justifiable to call it the "foreign policy state," the "veterans state," the "interest paying state" or, above all, the "military state" rather than call it the "welfare state." It leaves me puzzled as to what is meant. Mr. Dewey recently referred to "that clumsy Republican who invented the term." Actually they invented the term "welfare state" as one of political attack.

'Power with Welfare Measures'

MR. HAAKE: That is a rather interesting comment, and I think the answer to it, Krueger, is this: Some of us, and myself certainly, call it the welfare state even though a high percentage of the budget is taken up by military equipment and so on. I call it a welfare state because this particular government keeps itself in power, the Administration keeps itself in power, by use of the welfare measures, by use of the welfare arguments. It gets itself reelected by promising people it will do more and more for them, with the assumption or the underlying idea that it isn't going to cost them anything. So I don't believe that the budget will be a fair indication of whether or not it is a welfare state. It may be that after a while we would have to spend more on military expenditures because of a failing democracy in which the people lose faith in themselves and in the principles that made it. That kind of a group will wind up a police state!

MR. KRUEGER: This comment of yours about the present Administration keeping itself in power because of its welfare activities: you are not suggesting that that constitutes a major

distinction between Republican and Democratic parties?

MR. HAAKE: I am not concerned with the distinction between parties at all. I am saying that our problem is not nearly so much the difference between parties as it is in changing the basic thinking of the people of the United States. We've got to get the people of the United States to stop asking the government to do for them things they ought to do for themselves. As long as they feel the way they do now it is going to be a little difficult to make distinctions between parties.

Factor of War

MR. MCBURNEY: You made some reference, Haake, to the size of our national debt in an earlier statement. Do you consider this debt a result of welfare activities?

MR. HAAKE: No, not so much as it is a result of the war. Of course, the war has been a tremendous factor in building up that debt. But the point is that we are recognizing that debt now under the welfare state, such as we have at the moment; we are recognizing that debt as an asset rather than a liability. And Mr. Truman even proposes to increase our purchasing power and make us more prosperous by having more debts. So we have more debts to monetize on the theory of giving more purchasing power to the people. That is the new kind of economics.

MR. MCBURNEY: The argument I am getting at is this: Is the presence of a large debt an argument against welfare measures which might otherwise be desirable? Are you saying that this is a poor time to buy a new automobile, a poor time to make expenditures, federal expenditures, because of the size of this debt? Is that the gist of what you say?

MR. HAAKE: Of course, you wouldn't expect me to say this is a poor time to buy an automobile.

MR. KRUEGER: I thought that might be a very sore point.

MR. MCBURNEY: I am talking about federal expenditures.

MR. HAAKE: Precisely. The argument against the huge debt is that, having so large a debt already, there is a greater danger still in making it larger. I don't say the big debt is the reason against the welfare activities, but it is additional reason for going slow on them.

'Welfare Desirable'

MR. KRUEGER: I don't quite see that, Haake, because the interest on the national debt is paid to people who go ahead and spend just as if you hadn't taxed the money to pay the national debt in the first place. I should think in regard to welfare state activities they would have to be for their own sake desirable. Any specific kind of welfare undertaking, if carried out for its own sake, has to be desirable. I don't see that the national debt constitutes any reason for refraining from undertaking those activities. As a matter of fact, during the periods of substantial unemployment, it may very well be that welfare expenditures, undertaken by the federal government, which give employment to people, may actually result in an increase in the total amount of production rather than representing a drain on what people would otherwise have as a standard of living.

MR. HAAKE: I will gladly concede to you that if welfare activities were desirable, in and of themselves, if those activities improved the level of living for people and made them better people, then the fact that we have a debt ought not to stand in the way.

'Retards Production'

I don't begin with that *premise*. I begin with the *fact*—you notice the distinction between the two words perhaps—I begin with the *fact* that welfare activities themselves mean a less efficient use of our productive capacity. In other words, to the extent that the federal government uses money to provide for welfare, it takes productive capacity and uses it in

that way when it ought to be used in increasing production, and the net result is less goods for people.

MR. KRUEGER: One question has been cleared up and gotten out of the way. Haahe is not objecting to welfare activities because this country can't afford them, and neither am I. There is no way we can dodge the necessity of facing squarely the question of whether such welfare activities are for themselves desirable or whether they are not. Of course, they do cost money. There is no doubt about that. But they can be financed either by taxation, or in time of unemployment they can be financed by federal borrowing. But there is a distinction we made earlier, the distinction between the kind of welfare activities that do require substantial expenditures and the kind of welfare state activities that are of the control type, like the price control that we had during the war, or like the tariff, which is not an expenditure activity by the federal government. The tariff is a control over economic affairs—and a control, by the way, very widely supported by most of the people who are against the welfare state.

Federal Responsibilities

MR. HAAKE: Let's go back a moment. After you drew the two of us together, apparently you went to another point. I don't agree that it is desirable to spend money through the federal government for welfare. When I speak of welfare activities I have in mind not the federal government providing this welfare. I have in mind that it is far more desirable to do it ourselves. In other words, when a dollar leaves Park Ridge and it goes to Washington, it does not have pups on the way; it is smaller when it gets there. I want to keep that dollar at home. I want to spend that dollar myself and with my neighbor, the two of us. In that day we are going to get more for our money.

MR. KRUEGER: Would you like the roads in the country to be built by city and state without help by the federal government?

MR. HAAKE: No, I wouldn't, any more than I would like the State of Illinois to take on Japan when we come to a war. The federal government does have certain responsibilities. It has the responsibility of carrying on a war for the whole country, it has responsibilities for certain interstate activities. When we build a road that road interests not only Illinois, but Ohio and Indiana and Wisconsin.

MR. KRUEGER: And so does education and health and approximately every other welfare interest that you can name, so that people can move freely from one part of the country to another. Do you want to tie people down and insist that the people of Alabama shall stay in Alabama, and the people of Illinois stay in Illinois? Health and education matters in Alabama do concern people in Illinois and other states. You cannot train all the germs and viruses to respect those state lines.

MR. HAAKE: I think you are drawing a mistaken conclusion there. I would go, for example, for flood control by the government, because the state of Louisiana cannot control what happens up there, in my opinion, and can't do anything about it. On the other hand, education, eating, clothing, is not a matter that concerns the federal government. We can take care of sanitation in our little town of Park Ridge without having a Senator or Chief Justice, or even the President of the United States, come around. In fact, we do a lot better if they stay out. We can take care of our education without a federal commission of education.

'No Isolated Sections'

MR. KRUEGER: You can do it in Park Ridge for the same reason that Florida—which has a lot of people who make their money in New York living down there—would be able to do it. But those parts of the country which don't have such a concentration of people who make their money elsewhere, I think do have an economic relationship to other parts of the country and are entitled to draw on eco-

conomic support, economic help from other parts of the country in the education and the health of people raised in those places, say, Mississippi, many of whom later actually move to other parts of the country. I don't think people are any more fixed than the Mississippi River, which does run through several states. So do people, so do health and disease germs, and so do ignorance and knowledge.

MR. MCBURNEY: Haake, do you approve or disapprove of these welfare measures in principle, that is, in the aggregate? Or are you taking your stand on specific measures?

MR. HAAKE: On both, as a matter of fact. No one wants people to have diseases, and we want them to have an education, but it should be done in the best and most efficient way. If one could conceive of a federal government taking the responsibility for education throughout the United States and doing a decent job, that might be all right.

MR. KRUEGER: Nobody proposed that.

MR. HAAKE: That is the direction which we are taking. But what I am interested in is developing people. As a matter of fact, there was a time when we had pretty good schools. Out of Kentucky, out of Illinois, out of the backwoods, came some of the greatest people in America. They didn't have to go to Florida or Philadelphia and have someone subsidize their schools. People can read and think and work even though they don't have the furbelows that go with more expensive education, and the closer you bring the responsibility to the people themselves, the more likely you are to get things efficiently done.

National Progress

MR. KRUEGER: That sounds like the argument: "Because Abraham Lincoln read by the light of a log fire and learned to read *Pilgrim's Progress*, therefore nobody needs any electric lights or any books other than *Pilgrim's Progress*." I think we have better ways now and we have better techniques for spreading knowledge and for spreading health than was

true of the periods that produced Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington and the rest of them rolled up together.

MR. HAAKE: That is exactly right, and the reason that we have things so much better is that during these years the responsibility was carried not by government but by individuals. And that is the reason they are going to be better tomorrow, with all the electricity and all the advantages we have today; and they will continue to be better tomorrow provided we still keep the responsibility with the individual and not turn it over to the state.

Take the Diesel locomotive, for example, or take any other great invention. The reason we've got them is decentralized determination on those matters. Suppose someone invented a great machine to make a great improvement, and suppose that he had to go to a federal administration administering the railroads; you would never have a chance. But a man comes along with an idea for a Diesel locomotive he doesn't have to sell all of the various companies. He has to sell only one railroad. That is all he has to do and competition does the rest.

Government and Inventions

MR. KRUEGER: Your history there has been somewhat warped by your interest in making an attack on the welfare state. It happens that the development of the railroads in the United States took place heavily under the federal auspices and with considerable federal and state financing in them, and that was not only true of the railroads but of canals preceding the railroads.

MR. HAAKE: The fact remains that you have never had a single important invention coming out of government or one that has even been approved by government. It was George Washington and Ben Franklin that wouldn't bother to look at the steamboat. The federal government wouldn't have a thing to do with the cable across the Atlantic Ocean. Mr. Grant, when he was President, held the tele-

phone to his ear and said, "But who would want to use it?" It is the individual with the individual determination, in spite of government control and discouragement, that has taken the lead.

MR. MCBURNEY: How far would you go with this decentralization? You object, Haaake, to the extension of federal welfare measures. Do you object to state welfare? Do you object to the community undertaking these welfare activities in behalf of the people?

MR. HAAKE: There are certain welfare activities that are taken care of by the community. The Mormons, for example, when they had a relief problem took care of their own people. That is as it should be. In a community where there are neighbors, the neighbors should take care of each other. There is an advantage if it is done that way. They know where their money is being spent, how much is being spent. The further you get the spending of money away from the people, the less you get for every dollar you spend.

MR. KRUEGER: I take it you are saying that in the case of a major depression in the United States, you don't think the federal government ought to go in for employment relief activities?

Employment Relief

MR. HAAKE: The federal government ought to stay out of leaf raking activities, now and in the future.

MR. KRUEGER: That doesn't answer the question.

MR. HAAKE: I would say that the communities ought to take care of themselves. To the extent that they cannot, then it becomes a state problem, and the state for the most part can take care of it. As a matter of fact, I don't think that is a very real question. Our real problem is not to take care of unemployment after it comes. Our real problem is to stop it from coming.

MR. KRUEGER: That is true, but most of the welfare activities that are un-

dertaken have been undertaken because private economy did not succeed in solving the problem of poverty, did not succeed in keeping up its own expansion rate on new plants and capital equipment, and did not succeed in solving the depression problem. If you are complaining about state welfare, I think you ought to recognize that in large part the real reason for state welfare activities is because of the failure of private enterprise, and that if you want to reduce, if you want effectively to hold down state welfare activities, your primary job ought to be to solve the poverty problem, and to keep private economy expanding and solve the depression problem.

MR. HAAKE: You are leaving out, of course, the most important single factor in all those situations and that is, wars. War distorts an economy no matter what kind of system you have, and a distorted economy coming as a result of war will bring all these things in its train.

MR. MCBURNEY: But how efficient is the federal government in meeting these problems that you are talking about here? Haaake charges they do not do the job efficiently. It is better left to the community, the municipalities.

Federal or Municipal?

MR. KRUEGER: They do the job more efficiently in some areas and less efficiently in other areas. I don't think there is any general rule you can apply to that. There is nothing that is automatic about the efficiency of any organization, the government or any private organization. Now, I think government can operate a national social security plan more effectively and with a greater degree of general satisfaction to people than it can be operated by either individual initiative or small fraternal societies. I think government can operate post offices. I think it can give federal aid to the local community in the field of education. I think it can be operated in housing with a greater degree of efficiency than private housing which

has fallen flat on its back for most of my lifetime. There are fields where the federal government can be more efficient. A field where it would not be efficient would be as garbage collector. I think Park Ridge could do a much better job of that.

MR. HAAKE: Oh, yes, we do that much better. There is something you left out as I see it, in what you have said. The fact is that when you have control in the hands of government, that control is bound to be exercised by people for political rather than for the real welfare of the people. In other words, men want to keep themselves in power and any Administration that can get a lot of money to spend will spend that money to get votes rather than to do good with it. It is so easy to spend money to get votes. It is so easy to raise taxes without losing votes, and it is the political danger, the political threat particularly that is a disadvantage with this welfare state.

'Grab Bag State'

MR. KRUEGER: I agree that there are political dangers involved in welfare activities. I think the degree of safety with which we can put the federal government increasingly into welfare activities is directly proportional to the extent to which people take politics seriously. I wouldn't agree that a political decision is a bad decision. Political decisions can be good just as private decisions can be good decisions. If we are going to put the federal government increasingly into activities that involve the control of, or operation of, the economic system, if the federal government is going to assume increasing responsibilities for the welfare of the people, I think it becomes highly important that we have in mind a set of principles by which such activities can be judged; otherwise, what you get is the grab bag state instead of the welfare state.

My complaint with the arrangement of the present Administration is not on account of its welfare measures. It is because of its many, many measures that are of the grab bag

type, justified by some small group that wants it and not coordinated with the desires of other people. We need a higher degree of political development than we have had in the past.

MR. HAAKE: I agree with that thoroughly. We've got to have a much higher political development which will manifest itself in wiser administration of public affairs, and even more so, manifest itself in better understanding on the part of the public. This is a way of saying, however, that as we get this better understanding below and better understanding above, it also becomes less and less necessary to do the things for which it is set up. Politically mature people can take care of themselves.

If you will pardon my saying this. If you apply what we call the welfare state or applied socialism, they are really going to work beautifully in two places—it will work in heaven where it isn't necessary, and they already have it in hell and that is why it is hell.

'No Escape'

MR. KRUEGER: We are somewhere in between the two. This is neither heaven nor hell. There is no way you can escape the necessity of welfare state activities. My impression is that most people who criticize the welfare state agree with most of the activities that have been undertaken and are opposed to those that have not yet been undertaken.

MR. HAAKE: In conclusion, our primary concern ought to be to build men and women. Their physical being is of importance, of course. Over the centuries we have wanted to lift men and women in understanding and ability, and I can't conceive of doing that except through the exercise of their own powers, and the making of their own decisions.

MR. KRUEGER: I want the welfare state extended. I think the attack on it is an attack on specific measures but the extension of it requires a definite principle by which people can judge what is desirable and what is not desirable.

Suggested Readings



Compiled by Barbara Wynn, Assistant,
Reference Department, Deering
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HAYEK, FRIEDRICH AUGUST Von. *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1944.

Denounces socialized planning and warns against the danger in removing competition and *laissez faire*.

LAUTERBACH, ALBERT T. *Economic Security and Individual Freedom; Can We Have Both?* Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1948.

Answering in the affirmative, argues for more national planning.

National Association of Manufacturers of the United States of America. *Economic Principles Commission: American Individual Enterprise System; Its Nature, Evolution, and Future*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1946.

Factual presentation of America's economic system, the way in which it functions and the principles which will promote the maximum good for the American people.

American Economic Review 37: Papers and Proceedings, 335-66, My., '47. "Role of Social Security in a Stable Prosperity."

Includes "Social Security in an Unstable World," by L. Meriam; and "Financing Social Security," by E. J. Swan.

American Magazine 147:17+, Ja., '49. "More Security for You." O. R. EWING.

The Federal Security Administrator discusses proposed extension of national health, education, and old-age benefits.

American Magazine 147:24-5+, Je., '49. "We Can't Thrive on Security." K. S. WHERRY.

Senator Wherry attacks the Administration's plans for "free food, free doctors, free colleges, and handouts for everyone."

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 243:18-26+, Ja., '46. "Statement of Essential Human Rights."

Includes discussions on the rights to education, to work, to food and housing, and to social security.

Atlantic Monthly 185:61-4, Ja., '50. "Everybody on Relief?" A. E. MEYER.

Declares that the "nation is encouraging irresponsibility by a social security program weighted in favor of the spendthrift."

Commonweal 51:643-4, Mr. 31, '50. "The Fair Deal."

Describing various Fair Deal measures, such as federal aid for housing and education, the Brannan farm plan, etc., maintains that while it has increased the power and functions of the federal government, the end result will be the distribution of national wealth and the equalization of economic and political rights.

Commonweal 51:475-6, F. 10, '50. "Welfare State."

Defines the welfare state, and describes its origins and development.

Fortune 40:65-9+, O., '49. "Greatest Opportunity on Earth." R. W. DAVENPORT.

A realistic alternative to the welfare state.

Forum 112:328-31, D., '49. "Economics of the Welfare State." L. De RYCKE.

Maintains that much of what has been said in favor of the welfare state has been said in innocence of the disastrous results sure to follow.

- Harper's* 199:25-27, D., '49. "Dogged Retreat of the Doctors." M. MAYER.
The history of the A. M. A.'s fight against government medical insurance.
- Harper's* 199:72-7, D., '49. "Social Security Poor." C. H. GRATTAN.
Analyzes the current American trend toward more and more "welfare benefits."
- New Republic* 120:8-14, Ja. 10, '49. "State of the Union; A Program for a Liberal America."
Contains discussions on "Improving National Health; Extending Social Security; Providing Better Schools," etc.
- New York Times Magazine* p. 12+, Ja. 15, '50. "Britain's Health Plan: The Lesson for Us." D. M. HEYMAN.
Concludes that the result of the British system provides a warning to avoid overcentralization in our medical program.
- New York Times Magazine* p. 26+, N. 14, '48. "For Broader and Deeper Social Security." J. K. LASSER.
Pointing out that there is a general recognition that too many are left out and too many inadequately covered, tells what can be done about it.
- Survey Graphic* 34:394-6, O., '45. "Empty Pay Envelopes and Peace." H. HALL.
"What mass insecurity does to men, women and children."
- Survey* 86:134-5, Mr., '50. "Need Is an Anachronism." J. J. CORSON.
Maintains that full welfare services are a right of citizenship.
- Survey* 86:73-5, F., '50. "Turnabout on Something for Nothing." R. H. BREMNER.
Declares that a widespread demand for the use of politics as a means of advancing the welfare of all the people is a guarantee that government will not be subverted to class or party benefit.
- Survey* 86:126-30, Mr., '50. "What the Farm Shooting Is All About." D. KRAMER.
A survey of the controversial Brannan plan.
- Time* 55:19-21, F. 20, '50. "Price of Health: Two Ways to Pay It."
Describes what is already being done to safeguard and improve health in the United States, and the various schemes, including that of the administration, for national health legislation.
- United States News* 26:11-13, F. 4, '49. "Federal Keep in Life and Death for \$264 of Each Year's Pay."
What to expect under life-and-death social security. Estimates that the cost by 1955 will be well above \$12,000,000,000 annually.

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6. Should We Educate the Spirit in Our Public Schools?
7. The Problem of Allergy.
8. Is Deficit Spending Sound?
9. The Saar—European Trouble Spot.
10. Should Children Be Spanked?
11. Are We Neglecting the Exceptional Child?
12. Should Gambling Be Legalized?
13. Is A United Church Possible Now?
14. The Fact-Finding Board in Labor Disputes.
15. Do Our Democratic Liberties Depend on Mental Health?
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